Rules of the Game
All About Movement (Part Seven)
By Skip Williams

Spells, Conditions, and Movement

In Part Seven, we examine various conditions and spells that affect movement.

Conditions

The following conditions affect speed and movement, either directly or indirectly. This section deals only with each condition's affect on movement; there may be other effects, as noted in the Glossary section of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* (pages 300-301).

Ability Damage or Ability Drain: Any creature with an ability score reduced to 0 is either dead (0 Constitution), unconscious, (0 Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma), or helpless (0 Strength). Any of these could cramp your style. In addition, loss of Strength reduces a creature's ability to carry a load, which can affect the creature's encumbrance (see Part One).

Blinded: You're reduced to half speed (see Part One) when you're blinded unless you've got some other ability that makes up for your lack of sight, such as the blind sense or blindsight ability.

If you have the Blind-Fight feat, you move at three-quarters speed. This is a kind of hampered movement (and you suffer all the consequences for hampered movement as noted in Part One), but it's easiest to handle this as a reduction in your speed. Multiply your usual speed by 0.75, and round the result down to a nearest multiple of 5 feet. For example, if your speed is 30, your speed when blinded is 20 feet (30 ´ 0.75 = 22.5, round down to 20).

You are effectively blinded whenever visibility is reduced to nothing for you, such as when you don't have darkvision and you're in total darkness.

Blown Away: If you're blown away, you're moving, but that movement doesn't count against your movement for the current turn (if you're blown away during your own turn) or against your movement on your next turn (if you're blown away during someone else's turn). If being blown away moves you out of a threatened square, you provoke attacks of opportunity from any foes that threaten the square.

If you're on the ground when you're blown away, you're knocked prone while you're being blown, and you finish your involuntary movement prone (see the notes on the prone condition).

Checked: When you're checked, you can't move in the direction of the force that's checking you. You can move at right angles to the force that's checking you, and you can move along with the force, but you don't get an increase in speed.

If you're flying, a wind affect that checks you blows you along. This is like being blown away, except that you're not prone.

Cowering: When you're cowering, you can't take any actions, including move actions, and you also cannot take a 5-foot step.

Dazed: As with cowering, you cannot take any actions, including move actions, and you also cannot take a 5-foot step.

Disabled: A disabled creature can take only a single move action or single standard action and moves at half speed (see Part One) if it moves. Any strenuous activity damages the creature. Taking a single move action (at half speed) doesn't cause injury, but a standard action does, and that includes any standard action that involves moving, such as charging or withdrawing.

Entangled: Some forms of entanglement prevent movement completely, and some merely hamper movement (see Part One). Check the entangling effect's description to determine if movement is possible at all. An effect can sometimes completely prevents movement and sometimes merely hamper movement; for example, you're entangled and cannot move at all if you fail your saving throw against an *entangle* spell. You can, however, rip free with a Strength check and move at half speed.

When you're entangled and unable to move, you usually can use move actions that don't actually cause you to move (see Movement and Move Actions in Part One). The DM, however, should feel free to prohibit such actions when common sense suggests that they aren't possible. For example, when a character is trapped in an *entangle* effect, you can reasonably assume the character can do something such as draw a weapon or dig out a stored item if the character is standing up and wrapped in vegetation that is waist-high or lower. A character entangled while plowing through a thicket with brush taller than his head or entangled while prone might be unable to use any move actions at all.

Exhausted: You move at half speed when you're exhausted.

Fatigued: Youcannot run or charge when fatigued, but your movement isn't otherwise affected.

Frightened: When you're frightened, you must flee from the source of your fright as best you can. Your speed isn't affected for good or for ill, but you're obliged to move away as fast as you can. Though the rules don't specifically require it, you should always move along a path that takes you farther way from the source of your fright, never closer. (However, if you can see a clear path that briefly moves you closer to what frightened you before leading you away again, you can use that if no other path is available.)

Grappling: You can't move while grappling unless you first succeed with a grapple check and you're strong enough to drag your opponent (or opponents) along with you. Moving while grappling requires a standard action from you. If your grapple check succeeds, you can move at half speed as part of the standard action you used to move. Since you're spending a standard action to move while grappling, you can move only once.

The forgoing should not be confused with escaping from a grapple. If you break free from a grapple, you're no longer grappling. It takes a standard action to get loose, but, once you do, you can then use a move action move away (or do anything else you can do as a move action), with no impediment to your movement. Remember that your foe probably isn't grappling anymore, either, so if your foe is armed, you'll provoke an attack of opportunity from that foe as you move away.

Helpless: When you're helpless, you can't take any actions, including move actions, and you cannot take a 5-foot step.

Incorporeal: Incorporeal creatures usually can ignore most impediments to movement.

Knocked Down: If you're knocked down while on the ground, you fall prone (see the section on the prone condition). Flying creatures usually are blown back when knocked down, which is just like being blown away except that you are not knocked prone.

Nauseated: When you're nauseated, you can do nothing except take a single move action each turn. Your movement isn't otherwise hampered or restricted.

Panicked: A panicked creature's movement is affected in more or less the same way as a frightened creature's is, except that its path is random. The rules don't define random movement in this case. In practice, it's easiest to assume that a panicked creature moves away from the source of its fright along the most direct available route. When the creature encounters some obstacle, randomly determine which way it turns, but avoid having the creature move back toward the source of its fright if possible.

Paralyzed: Paralyzed creatures can take only purely mental actions. In most cases, that prevents the character from using most move, standard, or full-round actions. If the paralyzed creature has some form of movement that doesn't require it to move its body (such as a *fly* spell), it can use a move action to move, but it cannot take other sorts of move actions, such as drawing weapons.

Most spell-like abilities are purely mental. A supernatural ability that does not require the creature to move its body or expel something from its body might be available. Breath weapons aren't available to paralyzed creatures. Most energy draining attacks require the creature to touch a foe and are difficult, if not impossible, to use while paralyzed. Gaze attacks remain potent when a creature is paralyzed, but a paralyzed creature cannot actively use its gaze against specific foes (see the gaze attack description in the *Monster Manual* glossary).

Pinned: When you're pinned, you're held in one place and you cannot move from there. You also cannot take any move action, or any full-round or standard action except attempting to break the pin (see the section on grappling in Chapter 8 of the *Player's Handbook*).

Prone: When you're prone, you're lying on the ground. As noted in Part One, you can crawl 5 feet while prone as a move action, or you can use a move action to stand up (either of these provokes an attack of opportunity from foes that threaten you). You also can tumble 5 feet without provoking an attack of opportunity (see Part One).

Staggered: When you're staggered, you can take only a single move action or a single standard action each turn. Your movement isn't otherwise hampered or restricted.

Turned: For 10 rounds, turned creatures must move away by the best and fastest means available to them from whatever turned them. See the notes on the frightened condition for information on handling movement by turned creatures.

Spells

More than one hundred of the spells found in the *Player's Handbook* have some affect on movement, which is far too many to examine in detail here. Instead, we'll examine the kinds of ways spells affect movement.

Aerial Spells

Spells such as *levitate, fly,* and *air walk* allow a creature to leave the ground and move through the air.

Spells such as *fly* and *overland flight* actually grant the subject a fly speed for a time, and creatures using the spells are subject to all the rules on flight discussed in Parts Three and Four. Other spells don't actually impart flying speeds, but they still allow movement through the air in some fashion.

The *air walk* spell doesn't allow true flight, but it does enable the subject to literally walk on air. An air walker's movement is hampered if the character walks up or down through the air. The air walker's movement isn't hampered if the air walker gains or loses only 5 feet of altitude.

Winds can move an air walker around. If a powerful wind strikes an air walker, treat the subject as a flying creature when applying effects from Table 3-24 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. Even when the subject is too big to suffer any ill effects from a wind, a wind of strong or greater power will shift the subject. At the end of the creature's turn, it moves 5 feet for every five miles per hour of wind speed, provided that the air walker doesn't have anything to brace against or hold onto. This movement can provoke attacks of opportunity. If the wind is powerful enough to check, knock down, or blow away the subject, the movement from those effects doesn't stack with this effect, but you still apply any damage or other consequences from the wind effect. For example if a Small creature is struck by a blast of air moving 55 miles an hour, it will move 55 feet at the end of its turn. A 55-mile-an-hour wind, however, also is sufficient to blow away a Small flyer if it fails a Fortitude save. If the save fails, the air walker is blown 1d4x10 feet. Assuming the die roll indicates 30 feet of movement, the example creature still moves only 55 feet, but also takes 3d4 points of nonlethal damage from the blown away effect.

The *levitate* spell allows you to mentally direct the subject (which can be yourself) to move up or down as much as 20 feet each round; this is something you can do while paralyzed.

Moving a subject up or down is a move action for you. The spell doesn't allow horizontal movement, but if the subject has some surface to push off, he or she can move along that surface at half speed. Although the spell description doesn't mention it, it is reasonable to have winds affect a levitating subject exactly as they affect an air walker. You can use these rules for other creatures that are floating through the air as well, such as creatures using *feather fall* effects, or creatures floating downward after a *fly* or *air walk* spell has ended.

Barrier Spells

Barrier spells create physical or magical barriers that block or impede movement, or that inflict some effect when something moves through them.

When a spell creates a tangible barrier, creatures must move around it, climb over it, or break through it. When it's possible to break through a barrier spell, the spell description gives the barrier's hardness and hit points, or the spell description describes some other way to break through (*wall of thorns* is an example of the latter kind). Most magically created barriers are too smooth to climb if they're vertical. A *wall of thorns* spell isn't too smooth to climb. You can assume it has a Climb DC of 20, and that anyone climbing it takes damage from it as though passing through it.

Some barrier spells, such as *wall of fire* and *blade barrier* deal damage to things that pass through them, but they do not otherwise block movement unless their descriptions say they do. Most such spells can be aimed so that they appear in the same location as a creature. If so, the creature takes damage as though it passed through the barrier. Usually a creature that has a barrier dropped right on it in this manner can attempt a Reflex save to avoid damage. If this save succeeds, the creature avoids the barrier and ends up on the side of its choice (this occurs at the time the barrier occurs and doesn't count against the creature's movement during its next turn).

The *wall of ice* spell is a barrier that you can smash through, but you also take damage when passing through it. If a *wall of ice* effect is aimed so that it appears in a creature's space, a successful Reflex save from the creature keeps the wall from forming.

Entangling Spells

Several spells bind up their subjects so as to interfere with movement or prevent it altogether. Most of these spells simply entangle their subjects; see the section on the entangled condition for details.

A rope that has received an *animate rope* spell can entangle a creature and hamper its movement, but it won't render the creature unable to take move actions. If you tie an animated rope to something, the rope can hold an entangled creature in place, keeping it from moving from the spot (or from moving farther than the rope's length allows, depending on where and how you tie the rope).

The *entangle* spell causes everyone in its area to become entangled (whether those creatures are in the area when the spell is cast or if they enter the area later). The spell holds creatures in place if they fail their saves against the spell. It takes a full-round action and a Strength check (DC 20) to get moving again once stuck in place. If you fail your Strength check, you use up a full-round action making the attempt. If you succeed, you can move once at half speed as part of the full-round action you used to get free. Even though you're mobile, you're still entangled while inside the spell's area.

The *web* spell has an entangling effect that is similar to the *entangle* spell, except that movement is even more restricted inside the spell's area. If you are not stuck in place inside the spell's area, it takes a full-round action to move at all, and you must make a Strength or Escape Artist check. You move 5 feet for each full 5 points by which the check result exceeds 10.

Grappling Spells

Some spells can reach out and grab you just as a creature can. These spells include *Evard's black tentacles* and several of the *Bigby's hand* spells. Such spells make grapple attacks as creatures of a size listed in the spell's description, except that they don't provoke attacks of opportunity when they grab creatures. A number of spells in this category entangle creatures they aren't grappling (*Evard's black tentacles*, for example); if this is the case, the spell's description will say so.

Spells that Impede or Hamper Movement

Many spells create conditions that slow down movement. *Solid fog* is one example. A cloud of *solid fog* is so thick and cloying that any creature moving through it is reduced to a speed of 5 feet. This is just like hampered movement (see Part One), except that the creature's speed is reduced to 5 feet. The creature cannot run, charge, or take a 5-foot step, but it usually can move twice during its turn, covering 5 feet each time. If a creature

moving through solid fog encounters anything else that reduces its movement (such as difficult terrain), it is reduced to using a full-round action to move 5 feet (see Part Two).

Acid fog affects movement in the same manner as solid fog. *Plant growth* has a similar effect if the caster chooses the overgrowth option.

Other spells create less dramatic effects. The *grease* spell creates slippery conditions in which it is impossible to move without a Balance check (DC 10). Even with a successful check, movement is hampered. With a failed check, you can't move at all. Whether you try to move or not, however, you must make a Reflex save to avoid falling down. You attempt the save the moment you find yourself in the spell's area or at the beginning of your turn if you begin your turn in the area.

Sleet storm hampers movement just as a *grease* spell does, though there is no Reflex save required (it also blocks vision).

Speed-Enhancing Spells

Several spells, such as *haste* and *expeditious retreat,* increase the subject's speed ratings. Apply all speed increases before adjusting the subject's speed for encumbrance.

The *spider climb* spell grants a climb speed of 20, and it also allows the recipient to climb walls and ceilings without making Climb checks at all. The recipient otherwise functions just like a creature with a Climb speed (see Part Three).

Shape-Altering Spells

Spells that allow you to assume a new form, such as *alter self, polymorph,* and *shape change,* usually also give you whatever natural speed ratings your assumed form has. For example, if you polymorph into an eagle, you can fly as an eagle does (flying speed 80 feet with average maneuverability).

Spells that give the subject a gaseous form, such as *gaseous form* and *wind walk,* generally allow flight and the ability to pass through small openings or cracks. As a rule of thumb, a gaseous creature can pass through an opening as small as an inch square without difficulty. Smaller openings count as obstacles for gaseous creatures and passing through them costs 10 feet of movement. Creatures in gaseous form cannot enter water or other liquids.

Teleportation Spells

These spells instantly transport the subject from one place to another. This movement takes no time (but the action used to trigger the effect usually is at least a standard action). This movement also does not count against your movement for the turn; if you've used a *teleport* spell, you have not "moved" for purposes of taking a 5-foot step. However, some teleportation spells, such as *dimension door,* leave you unable to act after you've them. When you use a *dimension door* spell, you cannot take a 5-foot step or take any kind of action.

About the Author

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